

OBITUARY

William Devigne Russell-Hunter – 1926-2005



Professor W.D. Russell-Hunter, known to his friends as 'Gus', was a long-standing and influential member of The Andersonian Naturalists. He was born in Rutherglen on 3 May, 1926 and died at home in Easton, Maryland in the United States on 21 May, 2005. With his passing, the world has lost one of the most influential freshwater ecologists of the 20th Century.

Gus attended the University of Glasgow and graduated with an Honours BSc in 1946. This degree was followed with a PhD in 1953 and a DSc in 1961, both degrees from the University of Glasgow.

His initial research was in marine biology when, as a result of the Second World War, he served with the British Admiralty as a Scientific Officer on a marine anti-fouling team. This research had been made urgent by the sinking of the fouled – and therefore slower – HMS Hood by the Bismark earlier in the war. His placement on the Scientific and Technical Register, due to his academic achievement, moved him to this duty from his training as a Pilot and Observer flying in Swordfish aircraft (the last cloth and wood biplane to see significant combat in the war). His first published papers in 1948 and 1949 were derived from this work.

In 1948 he was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the Zoology Department of the University of Glasgow, then under the direction of Professor C.M. Yonge. His promotion to Lecturer in 1951 enabled him to achieve the three most important facets of his future life and career. Firstly, he married Myra Porter Rankin Chapman, a talented artist, in the Glasgow University Chapel on March 22, 1951. Secondly, he initiated a series of outstanding courses in invertebrate biology, which the writer was privileged to attend in the late 1950s. Thirdly, he was able to develop a research programme on the physiological ecology of freshwater molluscs in Loch Lomond and other waters in the west of Scotland, which were to prove the basis for his now-classic studies of marine and freshwater organisms and their behaviour, physiological ecology and functional morphology. His field base for these studies was the University Field Station at Rosdhu, which he helped Dr Harry Slack to establish in 1946.

In 1953 and 1954, Gus spent some time in Jamaica as a Carnegie Brown Fellow at the University of the West Indies. His interest in island faunas had been stimulated by his participation in an expedition of young scientists to the Garvellachs – a group of small uninhabited islands off the west coast of Scotland. Useful publications resulted from this trip and, at the time of his death, he was attempting to publish a resulting book, *The Isles of the Sea*.

Dr Russell-Hunter was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1965. He was a member of many learned societies during his lifetime, but his oldest membership was with the Natural History Society of Glasgow, which he joined when it was still the Andersonian Naturalists of Glasgow. He became an influential member of the Andersonians when he was elected to Council and also became Editor of *The Glasgow Naturalist*. During his time as Editor he maintained a high standard of editing and attracted many important papers to the journal. At the time of his death, he was the member of longest standing in the Society, having joined in November 1948.

From 1961 to 1963, though still based at the University of Glasgow, Gus visited the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where he served as a summer lecturer in the influential invertebrate zoology course. Scotland's loss was the United States' gain when he moved to a permanent appointment there as director of that course from 1964 to 1968. His experience with *The Glasgow Naturalist* proved of value when he served as Editor of the laboratory's *Biological Bulletin* from 1968-80. During those years this journal rose to prominence as a leading biological journal. Gus was also appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Marine Biological Laboratory, on which he served for four terms and in *emeritus* status thereafter.

As well as his appointment at Woods Hole, Gus was appointed to the staff of the Biology Department at Syracuse University, where he taught from 1963 to 1990. His career there, in both teaching and research, was distinguished and he and his many graduate students not only produced significant research but also created an environment for learning about biology for which the university became well known. He received research grants from many bodies and was recognised by the University in 1988, who honoured his teaching career with the William Wasserstrom Award.

In spite of being very busy with teaching and research, Gus managed to write four major texts – *A Biology of Lower Invertebrates* (1968), *A Biology of Higher Invertebrates* (1969), *Aquatic Productivity* (1970) and *A Life of Invertebrates* (1979). All of these were foundational for decades of students of invertebrate zoology throughout the world in their various translations.

Over his long research career of nearly six decades, Gus authored and published over 120 research papers. He was involved in very many more than this through his research students, but chose not to follow the common practice of adding his name so as to allow them a better chance to launch their own careers. This facet of his life – that of mentor and teacher – was perhaps his greatest hall mark as his generous and gracious work advising his graduate and undergraduate students created a culture of researchers and teachers through whom he has had a global impact in the fields of physiological ecology, malacology and invertebrate zoology.

His long career was honoured in 1984 at the 'International Symposium on the Physiological Ecology of Freshwater Molluscs Honoring Dr. W.D. Russell-Hunter', the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Union. At this symposium, a full account of his extensive scientific achievements was presented in a paper by McMahon & Burky (1985: *American Malacological Bulletin*, 3, 135-142). He was again honoured in 1999, when the Freshwater Mollusc Conservation Society presented him with their first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award.

In later years, after the death of his wife, for whom he cared during her decade-long battle with cancer, Gus turned to oil and acrylic painting (for which he won awards), boating, reading and the Religious Society of Friends. A memorial service was held for him at the Marine Biological Laboratory and his ashes were scattered in the waters near Martha's Vineyard where he had loved to sail with Myra during summers at Wood Hole. He is survived by his son Peregrine and three grandchildren.

Peter S Maitland

A similar obituary notice appeared in the Woods Hole Marine Laboratory Web Site.
<http://www.mbl.edu/> Then search for obituaries. Thursday 28th December 2006.